

The Pocket Universe - Episode 001

It was 1993 in a pocket universe called “Oops”.

Oops is a largish sort of pocket universe which has seams and stitching around the edges. It is a pocket universe which happens to be an actual pocket.

The people who live there get rather religious and mystical when they talk about the edges and the stitching. There is a sense of awe and the people’s voices drop into tones of sheer reverence when they mention the flap at the top. There are a great many mythological tales about what may or may not exist beyond the flap at the top.

There are also many speculations about how the pocket came into existence in the first place and these speculations often involve the concept of a giant who has changed his trousers. Philosophers debate about what caused the giant to change his trousers and whether it should be a matter of concern to everybody else. Philosophers also worry about an event in the future called “What if he changes them again?”. Priests clutched their worry beads and frantically chanted the magical words “Don’t change your trousers! Don’t change your trousers! Don’t change your trousers!”

Contained within the Oops universe is another Glastonbury, very similar to the Glastonbury in our universe. Both Glastonburys have “thin reality” which means the relationship between fact and fiction is often looser and more casual, easy going, than in other places.

Some people occasionally travelled back and forth between the two Glastonburys. It could happen seemingly at random. When it did happen people often noticed a difference in the flow of time. The 1970s in our world seemed to be somehow connected to the 1990s in the pocket world of Oops.

Two individuals who had travelled between the two Glastonburys more often than most were Wiz Wayland Smith and Professor Jim Baggins. Wiz and Jim were a travelling double act with pretensions toward magic and vaudeville. They were itinerant performers and students of life, the pocket universe and not quite everything. Their busking double-act was a chaotic mish mash mix-up of magic, vaudeville and being at crossed purposes. Their style was a singing, dancing, conjuring, poetry declaiming sort of travelling show and they hoped that they would one day make enough money from it to open a book shop. Wiz also wanted to open a magic shop selling wizardly equipment (but he complained that it was “hard to get the staff”).

They had made £3 and 27p by falling down a lot all over Glastonbury. Wiz had done his famous soft shoe shuffling non-tap dance while accompanying himself on the rhythmic bicycle pump. Baggins had recited his dramatic monologue “The Creature that Devoured Leningrad” with all the comic stances and gestures.

Wiz was capering the Bok up and down the High Street and the crowd was walking past and attempting to avoid even noticing the double act's dreadful performance. However a few people threw things at them, fruit and stones and whatnot, and the assortment of objects thus gained by the duo included coins so they were happy enough with the result.

Wiz sang "The Ballad of Jesse James" to little or no effect and Baggins signalled that they should call it a day. Wiz agreed and they retreated to the Abbey Tea Rooms for a much needed repast of tea and toast.

The magic which maintained the existence of the pocket universe shifted and shifted again. The skies cycled through colour schemes of turquoise, indigo, russet brown and pink. Gazing out of the window of the café Wiz watched the changing sky colours and was glad that it wasn't currently going snot-coloured as it sometimes did. There was an old rhyme in the pocket universe:

*"Red sky at night,
Shepherd's delight,
Snot-coloured in the afternoon,
avoid that greasy spoon".*

Since the sky had not turned to snot, Wiz could feel reasonably comfortable that their tea and toast would not make him ill. Life in the pocket universe was very changeable what with all the magic and weather and what-not.

Meanwhile, in a different part of the pocket, some considerably more sinister goings on were afoot.

Molidridinaur was a tall thin angry looking man with glowing eyes and a long ceremonial robe. In his day-to-day life he was Chief Inspector Charlie Gaunkreep of the Pocket Universe Police Precinct (P.U.P.P.). He had taken over his local branch of The Grand Order of Badgers and Water Voles and had hypnotised all of its members into treating him like a god and becoming his willing slaves who were now known as The Underlings.

Since then he had maintained a dual role as both police officer and god of The Underlings. He had adopted the name "Molidridinaur" from a prophecy in an old grimoire . The prophecy ran "When all the world is sewn up tight and Kundalini steals the night then shall Molidridinaur show us what his power is for!"

Thus Chief Inspector Gaunkreep became the feared Molidridinaur and lived it to the hilt, ceremonial robes and ritual practices and all.

In a dark and cold stone chamber underneath The Tor of pocket Glastonbury in the Pocket Universe of Oops the fire burned on the altar and The Underlings in their cowled robes walked the mystic circle.

Molidridinaur turned around thrice. He loved the ritual. He lifted the holy cup above the altar and held the cup there for a minute to give it time to glint and shine in the candle light. Then he brought the cup down to his lips and drank deep of the mystic Dandelion and Burdock which had been prepared by his finest herbalists (Doris and Doreen, two forensic detectives

who worked in the lab at the local nick). He drained the cup and threw it, clattering metallically down upon the flagstones. His voice boomed out “Underlings! Bring me those two clowns who think they are wizards! I think their names are Baggins and Wiz. They are completely stupid but I might be able to make use of them in my evil plans!!!”

Molidridinaur’s dozens of followers bowed their heads in assent and, velvet robed, cross-eyed and entranced, they marched out of the chilly chamber underneath The Tor of pocket Glastonbury and went to their quad bikes. The hunt for Wiz and Jim had begun! Speaking of Wiz and Jim, they had finished their meal and were strolling along Chilkwell Street when the sky suddenly turned snot-coloured.

Wiz turned his head upwards and exclaimed “What the...? Who the...?” Professor Baggins momentarily froze in panic. “Incredibloidy! It doesn’t usually change colour as quickly as that!”

Grabbing their bags and holding onto their hats Wiz and Baggins ran for cover in the wrong direction, then saw The Underlings running towards them from the Tor end of the street.

“Time for a 180 and a vamoose!” announced Wiz and they high-tailed it down the road for all they were worth.

The Underlings were gaining.

All seemed lost when, at very nearly the last moment, a car pulled up and then the driver shouted “Jump in lads! I can outpace them easily in this jalopy!”

They didn’t argue. The two music hall funsters jumped into the car and the driver stamped on the accelerator.

They went from almost nothing to near take-off speed in a matter of seconds and the faces of Wiz and Prof Baggins were contorted by g-forces at the same moment that they realised with astonishment that their rescuer was a humanoid lizard in a zoot suit!